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DOES DEATH END ALL?



MADISON C. PETERS

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BY

MADISON C. PETERS

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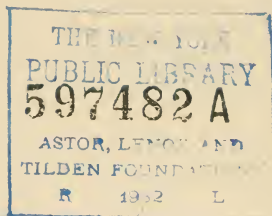
I feel my immortality o'ersweeps
All pains, all tears, all time, all fears and peals
Like the eternal thunders of the deep,
Into my ears this truth, "Thou liv'st forever."—BYRON.

C
B.

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MADISON C. PETERS

To
The Thousands of Men and Women
Representing many Races and Religions
Worshipping in the
Majestic Theatre, New York
Every Sunday Morning
This Substance of a Series of Sermons is
Affectionately Inscribed by
their Minister, the Author
In Recognition of their Enthusiastic Support of His
Efforts to Preach the Gospel to the Unchurched in
a Practical and Humanitarian Way in the Hope
and With the Prayer that We Shall All
Without the Loss of One, Meet,
Know and Love Each Other
Again in Worlds on
High.

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If a man die shall he live again?—JOB.

We do not believe in immortality because we have proved it, but we forever try to prove it because we believe it.—MARTINEAU.

The grave itself is but a covered bridge leading from light to light through a brief darkness.—LONGFELLOW.

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.--TENNYSON.

Does Death End All?

I.

IMMORTALITY A WORLD-WIDE BELIEF.

FROM the world's earliest morning the thought of man linked life to a longer chain of time than that between the cradle and the grave. We find everywhere what Emerson calls "man's audacious belief in a future life." "In the minds of all men, or wherever man appears," says the sage of Concord, "this belief appears with him,—in the savage, savagely; in the pure, purely." John Fiske, in "Myths and Myth Makers," says: "The Idea of Death is something impossible for the primitive mind to entertain." Among the primitive people, like the Egyptians, the doctrine of immortality was not a mere hypothesis; it was as Schlegel was forced to admit, "a lively certainty, like the feelings of one's own being." And, if according to Carlyle, living in the hope of immortality is derived from the nobility of man, then must the old tenants of Egypt have been a noble race.

That the future life is but a shadow of the present, is the idea that runs through Homer, who lived about nine hundred years before Christ. What noble and elevated conceptions of life in the spirit world Socrates gives us five hundred years before Christ. What an argument in Plato's "Phaedon" to demonstrate the immortality—the

profoundest reason ever produced. That man lived on somehow or other, were it only in the melancholy shadow of existence, was the general idea ever since there was a Greek people.

Cicero, the great Roman orator, one hundred years before Christ, contended earnestly and eloquently against those who denied the soul's immortality. Virgil, writing fifty years before Christ, reflects the sentiments of the Romans in his *Æneid*, which abounds with allusions to the dead.

Not only among the cultured nations do we find this sentiment. It has found its way into South Sea Islands and those of the Pacific. It has diffused itself over Lapland, Asia and Africa. Why in that forest grave, around which plumed and painted warriors stand unmoved and immovable as statues, do they bury with the body of the Indian chief his canoe and bow and arrow? He goes to follow the chase and hunt the deer in the spectre-land, where the Great Spirit lives and the spirits of his fathers have gone before him. Some tribes lighted fires on the grave that the departed might not journey in the dark. Among the Seneca Indians when a maiden died they had a custom of imprisoning a young bird until it first began to try its powers of song. Then loading it with messages and caresses, they loosed its bonds over her grave, in the belief that it would neither fold its wings, nor close its eyes until it

had flown to the spirit-land and delivered its precious burden of affection to the loved and lost.

In one form or another, however distorted or misshapen, however steeped in savagery or sunk in superstition, the idea of a future life persists universally and outlasts all kinds of vehicles that seemed to contain it. Like some river of water of life flowing ceaselessly through the universal heart of humanity, it seems to say,—

Men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

What is this intimation of immortality, this profoundest of all intuitions, this most ineradicable of all instincts, which lives ever on, renewing its youth, rising up from the ashes of dead fires, and an angel voice that sings on, above all the din of superstition, the degradations and miseries, the follies and fears of life? What is it, if it is not the testimony of God speaking in the heart of the child, the whisper of heaven, claiming for its own this thing of earth?

Cicero long since said: "In everything the consent of all nations is to be accounted the law of nature, and to resist it is to resist the voice of God." An error never perpetuates itself. Falsehood has no inherent recuperative energy. Error alone is sectional. Bryant says: "Error wounded writhes in pain and dies amidst its worshipers." Where do we go to find out what is truth, but to concurrent human testimony? All men cannot

be deceived, therefore immortality is a reality. A belief so universal, so entirely agreeable to our feelings, so accordant with our reason, so independent of education, so uninfluenced by differences of culture, antecedents and surroundings, cannot be false and misleading.

This belief is clearly not the result of education. It could not have originated with man, nor have come to him from without. It must proceed therefore from a supreme moral intelligence. It has its foundation in the inward predisposition of our mental and moral constitution, implanted there by God Himself. This feeling that there is a hereafter, this intuitiveness is the counterpart of reality. Just as the reflection of a face in the water is sufficient evidence that the face itself is not an illusion. The idea of immortality is interwoven with the mind, it is a part of the soul's original furniture; it is God's appointed witness that we shall live again.

Man is the only creature which has this religious instinct, therefore immortality must be the end to which it leads. If man has an instinct looking forward to a future life, and there is no future life provided for him, then he is the solitary exception to a rule otherwise universal. There is no example in nature of an organic instinct without its correlate. Where do we see an instance of a creature instinctively craving a certain kind of food in a place where no such food can be found? When

the swallows' instinct causes them to fly away from clouds and storms to seek a warmer country, do they not actually find a milder climate beyond the sea? Nature never utters false prophecies. And if this be true with regard to the impulses of physical life, why should it not be true with regard to the superior instincts of the soul? Want is a prophecy of destiny. As Schiller puts it: "Was der Geist verspricht leistet die Natur;" what the spirit promises nature performs. Addison clearly portrays the philosophical mind of Cato in the following lines, æ sublime in expression as in depth of reasoning:

It must be so, Plato, thou reasonest well,
Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This longing after immortality?
Or whence this secret dread and inward horror,
Of falling into naught? Why shrinks the soul
Back on herself and startles at destruction?
'Tis the divinity that stirs within us,
'Tis heaven itself that points out a hereafter,
And intimates eternity to man.

Must we believe that God has raised these hopes to crush them? No! good God, no! It is not conceivable of a wise and loving Father that when we are ready to burst out into songs of love and wonder, that our lips are to be forever sealed. Why are we endowed with this intense clinging to our own conscions personal life if maybe tomorrow or surely in a few years we shall be snuffed out like a candle? If I believed that I

was to behold nothing but the earthly scene of the eternal drama, and when my spirit was wrapt in anxiety I must perish in suspense, I would curse the day that gave me birth, I would never smile again, I would go weeping through life. Is immortality a dream? Let me dream on. I am content.

Yes, if 'twere only a dream,
Better it were to clasp it,
Brood on it until it seem
Real as the lines that grasp it.

Why is it that when death comes it seems to bring with it to all men conscious assurance of immortality? When men go out of life they let go their doubts and sweep into the satisfying faith of a hereafter. On his death-bed a professed atheist requested to be buried by the side of his Christian wife and daughter. When asked why, his response was, "If there be a resurrection of the righteous, they will get me up somehow or other and take me with them." This little incident reveals the heart of man, tells the story of an immortal soul and voices our common hope.

"All men," says Theodore Parker, "desire to be immortal." They cling to life because they love it. They shrink from death, not on account of the pangs of dying, or of the results that follow, but because they dread the thought of going out of existence—of being dead. What is this love of life and the fear of death but the natural expres-

sion of that conviction of personal immortality which the inspiration of God breathed into the human spirit? The sentiment of the race by its evident longing for another life finds echo in the lines of Tennyson :

No life that breathes with human breath
Has ever truly longed for death.



MAN'S RESTLESS SPIRIT—PROOF OF IMMORTALITY.

II.

Life is worth living. It is only mean to the man who makes it so. Yet, without being guilty of either ingratitude or pessimism, we may assert that it fails to satisfy the deepest cravings of the heart. Expectation, and not satisfaction, seems to be all that even the most favored ever find on earth. The world exhausted itself on Solomon; he was a multi-billionaire; his Empire stretched from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, from the foot of Lebanon to the desert bordering on Egypt; he was the encyclopaedia of his age; he lived in a palace which required fifteen-and-a-half years to complete; he had forty thousand horses for chariots. The style of grandeur in which he lived almost passed credence, yet he pronounced all vanity.

Queen Elizabeth, proud empress over a mighty realm, with three thousand dresses in her wardrobe, enough one would think to make any woman happy, but she was far from happy. From her dying couch comes the cry, "Millions of money for an inch of time." If that offer had been possible, how it would have revolutionized financial affairs for a time. Crowns may be set "with diamonds or Indian stones," but the kings and queens seldom enjoy the crown of content which is worn upon the heart. Do you imagine that the great heart of Abraham Lincoln ever found a moment's happiness

in the White House? Thackeray one of the most genial and lovable souls after he had won the applause of all intelligent lands by his wonderful genius, sits down in a Paris restaurant, looks at the other end of the room and wonders whose that forlorn and wretched looking face before him is. Rising up he finds that it is Thackeray in a mirror.

Man's soul is fluttering within like a caged bird, the noblest creature on the earth and at the same time the most miserable; he has greater gifts and higher qualities than any other visible being, and yet he, and only he, is lonely and dejected, sad and sorrowful. Man alone carries with him a heavy heart. How merrily sing the birds as they fly along over the fields and forests or cleave the mountain air, and how perfectly happy are they as they tuck their heads under their wings when the shadows of night fall and the wind cradles them on some swinging bough! The flocks and herds upon a thousand hills, the myriad forms of insect life, every winged fly and tuneful beetle, the fish that gaily sport and gambol in the rivers and seas, all can find the end of their being; not a thought of future want disturbs their perfect tranquility. But never so with man. He alone is never satisfied no matter what his wealth, or fame, or knowledge, or power, or earthly pleasures. From the king to the beggar, "man never is, but always to be blest."

What is the explanation? Has God made the beast that perishes to find his every desire gratified, while man is created with immortal longings that shall have no satisfactory response either in time or in eternity?

“We shall be satisfied when His glory shall appear.” It is to this purpose God has given us this insatiable thirst. Man pants after happiness, infinite in duration; his natural hopes and desires run beyond the bounds of time, his “soul uneasy and confined from home rests and expatiates in a life to come.”



III.

THE SOUL IMMATERIAL, THEREFORE IMMORTAL.

There is a close intimacy between mind and matter, but there is no identity between soul and the body. We are accustomed to say that the eye sees, the ear hears, and the finger feels, but they do not. The eyes and ears are but the instruments which become the media of intelligence to absolute mind, which uses them whenever that mind is inclined or obliged to employ them. So of the tongue and the hand, they are all adapted to perform the will of an indwelling and controlling rational spirit. To explain mind it has been suggested that galvanism or electricity is the source of the nervous influence of the human system. Would all the galvanism or electricity in the world produce the philosophy of Newton, which sought with all comprehending grasp to encircle the universe of God? If mere galvanic influence is the source of thought, then it would follow that if you could impart to an animal a greater quantity of galvanic power you would raise him nearer to the dignity of man, or if you could impart to a fool a greater quantity of electricity, you might bring him to the height of a Shakespeare. The very statement of the thing is enough to demonstrate its absurdity. There must be some agent prior to and extraneous to the brain, which acts upon the brain, and thereby upon the physical system of man.

Physiologists tell us that our bodies undergo complete changes. Say every seven years every particle of man's physical structure is changed, or transferred or removed, then the man of forty-nine has actually had seven bodies. Then if the mind is material, if it is of the body, it must have undergone a corresponding change, and therefore in every seven years a man's consciousness that he is must have changed, there would not be any recollection of his past life nor knowledge of personal identity, nor assurance that at forty-nine years of age he is the same person that he was at twenty-one or thirty-five. You know that you have undergone changes, yet you have the consciousness of personal identity. What is that something that has remained intact, that has not been affected by the perpetual pulling down of the old material and a perpetual replacement by new? In this human microcosm every time the watch ticks there are millions of molecules of the old body dissolved and carried away and their places supplied by as many millions of new. Yet you know that notwithstanding this process of destruction going on in every portion of your frame, that throughout the years you have maintained your personal identity, which forces you to admit the presence of something besides matter, something that is free from the perpetual changes to which matter is subject—that matter flows on, while the spiritual substance called soul, endures distinct from and

independent of matter. The soul is endowed with immortality as a part of its very nature. It is an immaterial substance, inaccessible to all violence from matter, and therefore cannot perish through its instrumentality. As Addison sings :

The soul secure in her existence, smiles
At the drawn dagger and defies its point.
The stars may fade away, the sun himself
Grow dim with age, and nature sink in years,
But she shall flourish in immortal youth,
Unhurt amid the war of elements,
The wreck of matter and the crash of worlds.

The mind never sleeps. Who is not conscious that his mind is frequently in a state of more active and vigorous exercise during sleep than in the waking hours? The famous astronomer, Sir John Herschell, declared that the following stanza was composed by him while sleeping and dreaming, November 28, 1841, and written down immediately on waking :

Throw thyself on thy God, nor mock him with feeble denial.

Sure of His love and oh ! sure of His mercy at last ;
Bitter and deep though its draught, yet shun not the cup of
thy trial,

But in its healing effect, smile at its bitterness past.

Upon the hypothesis that the mind and the body are alike material, how are these things to be accounted for? Our very dreams by night instruct us that we have within these changing bodies of ours, a living, active principle, a spirit which disdains obedience to physical laws—to rest

when it rests, and die when it dies and must therefore live on when the body shall crumble back to dust.

If the mind grows and dies with the body, why is it that children have thoughts and fears and feelings which they are not able to express by the bodily organs? Children grow up with mental impressions that we cannot account for—the listening look, the riveted attention show that the mind in the child is greater than the body.

We find also that mind is not always wasted by disease. Take the case of George Dana Boardman, for many years minister of the First Baptist Church in Philadelphia. Paralysis had unnerved and unstrung the whole body—in the most distressed condition imaginable, yet his intellectual powers remained to his last moments unscathed. The subtlety, the wisdom, the skill, the talent and the penetration of his mind remained as vigorous as in the meridian of his life—while he held death at bay he finished his "Ethics of the Body," the crowning victory of his splendid genius.

There must be something within man that constitutes real self and which enables him to feel that in spite of all his physical calamities there is that in him which is superior to decay and when the physical proportions of his being have dissolved into the primitive elements of dust, his soul unaffected "stands immortal amid ruin" like the soul of Ianthe described by Shelley.

IV

THE INDESTRUCTIBILITY OF MATTER.

According to the positive teaching of the most advanced science of the day nothing in the whole realm of nature is really destroyed in the sense of being annihilated. We have no power over matter to destroy it. We can change its form only. The mere mote floating in the sunbeam is imperishable. What we call "death" does not involve extinction, only change. When we speak of anything as destroyed what we really mean is that it has altered its condition. When we affirm that it no longer is, we affirm only that it no longer is what it was. It has become something else. You may freeze a drop of water, or heat it to steam, decompose it into its elementary gases, or explode it; it still exists every atom of it; or disperse or change its elements as we may, they will forever defy all efforts at their annihilation. Annihilation is a name for what never yet occurred to matter and never can. It is an established law of nature that nothing that is once launched into being shall ever go out of existence.

We are told that the race is perpetual, but the individuals are perishable. To the animal the present is everything while the future is the great fountain of man's happiness. If the present is all to the animal, when extinguished it loses nothing.

But if man be annihilated he loses all the past treasures he has accumulated and foregoes all he anticipated for the future, a catastrophe too big for human imagination to conceive, too horrid for the mind to dwell upon.

The destruction of the apple-tree is merely a change of form and development, a transmigration of substance, but man's soul thus reduced cannot become thus revived. My consciousness can never be another man's. The destruction of the tree is only its preparation for another existence, perhaps more beautiful than its former one; the destruction of my soul must, by necessity of the case, be utter annihilation. It can never be transmigration or be transferred to any other. The consciousness of personal identity which constitutes me is inalienable from me ; it must be extinguished altogether or perpetuated in myself.

The endless expansion and growth of the tree would be mischievous ; there would be no space or room for other trees just as useful, but the reverse is true of man's soul. The more he masters the more he expands the powers of those around him.

V.

IMMORTALITY'S INFLUENCE ON CONDUCT.

Renan says our evidence for the truth of immortality may be found in the nobility of behavior it inspires. The idea that man is but—

The pilgrim of a day,
Spouse of the worm and brother of the clay,
Frail as the leaf in autumn's yellow bower,
Dust in the wind or dew upon the flower,

A child without a sire,
Whose mortal life and transitory fire,
Light to the grave his chance created form,
As ocean wrecks illuminate the storm.

And then

To-night and silence sink forever more !

does not kindle great deeds and strengthen for any sublime endeavor. Cicero said of the Epicurean creed that it was utterly to be rejected because it led to nothing worthy or generous. If death ends all, what an imposture our system of laws on which society is founded. If we must wholly perish, the maxims of charity and justice and the precepts of honor and friendship are empty words. Why should they be binding if in this life only we have hope? What duty do we owe to the dead, to the living or to ourselves, if all will be nothing? If retribution terminates with the grave, morality is a bugbear of human invention. What are the sweet ties of kindred if we shall not live again? What sanctity is there to the last wish of the dying

if death is a wall instead of a door? What is obedience to laws but an insane servitude, justice an unwarrantable infringement upon liberty, the laws of marriage a vain scruple, and government an imposition upon credulity, if death ends all?

There was one nation and only one that ever tried to destroy belief in God in immortality. France decreed in national convention that there was no God and death an eternal sleep. The Sabbath was abolished, churches were turned into temples of reason, the Bible was dragged along the streets by way of derision and contempt. Infidelity then reigned and frightful was its reign. Its crown was terror, its throne the guillotine, its sceptre the battle-axe, its palace yard a field of blood, and its royal robes dripped with human gore. Gutters were filled with the torn shreds of human flesh. Property was confiscated. The morning breeze and evening wind bore across the vine-clad hills of France the cries of suffering and the shrieks of terror, and to save the metropolis and the kingdom from utter desolation, the infidel authorities had to institute the Sabbath and public worship. Were the belief in God and immortality to die out in the human heart, the flood-gates of vice would open wide, plunge the world into the grave of despair, and consign humanity to the dungeons of the damned.

VI

THE FUTURE LIFE A NECESSITY TO VINDICATE GOD'S CHARACTER

All the arguments that go to prove the existence of God—a God endowed with such attributes as are essential to our very conception of His character, point out the moral necessity of a future state of existence beyond the grave, in which the imperfections and inequalities of the present moral government will not only be redressed, but the whole will be shown to be holy and righteous.

There is sin and there is punishment for sin, which we daily witness. But there is not for all sin such a reckoning in this world as meets the claims of righteousness and justice. Do we not see evil doings go undetected and many bad men pass unpunished? See how often the righteous suffer and the wicked flourish. When we take a deliberate view we are naturally led to exclaim: "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Is there no reward for the righteous? Is there no punishment for the workers of iniquity? Is there no God that judgeth in the earth?"

And indeed, were there no retribution beyond the limits of this present life, we should be necessarily obliged to admit one or the other of the following conclusions: Either that no Moral Governor of the world exists or that justice and judgment are not the habitations of His throne.

If the moral government, the existence of which our experience avouches, is ever to have its administrations perfected and wrought to a complete actualizing of its own manifest principles, it can only be in another state of existence, and the double conclusion presses upon us, that there is a future life, and that that life is one of rewards and punishments.

Earthly providence is a travesty of justice on any other theory that it is a preliminary stage which is to be followed by rectification. God must in justice to Himself, before the assembled universe, send the evil-doer to desolation and crown suffering goodness, to show that He was always on the side of right. Sin is often in honor here, and goodness in dishonor, and that God may demonstrate that He is both just and good, man must stand again after death. The crown must be put upon righteousness and injustice driven to its own place, that justice may again grow bright and the universe rejoice in its Righteous Ruler.

VII.

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL, INFERRED FROM THE STRUCTURE OF THE BODY IN WHICH IT DWELLS.

The body in which the soul lives is the climax of all beauty, completeness and adaptation which is aimed at and apprehended by slow degrees through the lower grades of the animal creation. God has not given us the strength of the horse or the elephant, but He has endowed us with intelligence so as to apply our strength for ourselves and surpass the power of all other creatures. God has not given us the swiftness of the eagle, the hearing of the elk, the sight of the panther or the keen scent of the fox hound, nor has He clothed us with the delicate and dazzling plumage of the Bird of Paradise, but He has given us command of forces that can transport us where the birds of the air can never fly; He has given to the human face the beauty of expression and to the human form a grace of movement more impressive than brilliant robes; God has not endowed us with a tenacity of life which belongs to some of the animal creation, but He has enabled us to live and enjoy life in all seasons and climates the world around. Man is the only animal that by his own exertions and capacities has become a cosmopolite. It is strange that man should have such a universal diffusion, the

parts of the world uninhabited by him, making up less than one-tenth of the fifty-two millions of square miles of the earth's surface, while those animals which are, zoologically, most nearly allied to man in structure, have exceedingly narrow areas of distribution. For instance, the gorilla is confined to a small tract of West Africa, the chimpanzee to a still more restricted portion of the same continent, that between the sea coast on the West and the meridian of Lake Tanganyika on the East, while the ourang-outang is limited to the islands of Sumatra and Borneo.

Man is the greatest of all God's great works ; the superficies and outlines of his organization show him to be infinitely superior to all those visible beings by which he is surrounded.

The number of bones in the human body is variously estimated, say, two hundred and forty, (the bones vary in different periods of life, several, separated in youth, being united in old age) ; these bones have forty distinct indentions, four hundred and forty-six muscles within, so that the bones and muscles have upwards of fourteen thousand indentions. There are not less than ten thousand nerves, with an equal number of veins and arteries, one thousand ligaments, four thousand lacteals and lymphatics, one hundred thousand glands, and the skin contains not less than two hundred millions of pores, all of which are so many avenues of health or sickness, life or death.

No mechanism ever invented by man was ever so well contrived as the *eye* which is both a *camera obscura* and a telescope, takes the direction of every desire and accomodates itself to every range of distance in all degrees of light. The *ear* a complete acoustic instrument, with its exterior trumpet collecting sounds, its vibrating tympanum, its chamber and widening passages acting as chords to brace the drum just as required, while the whole is built-up within a stone-like structure which prevents the sound from being wasted. The *hand* in itself is sufficient to suggest the nobleness of the creature to whom such an organ has been given. With it, from instruments, can be evoked sweetest music to express almost every conceivable feeling and emotion, it can tunnel the mountains, cut down the forests, apply the fuse to the cannon creating a thunder which shakes both earth and sky, and yet it can give a touch so delicate as to move a microscopic mote from the eye. The *heart*, about ten ounces in weight, contracts about four thousand times every hour and through it during that period, passes two-hundred-and-fifty pounds of blood, while within the compass of a day it makes more than one hundred thousand pulsations and in a year more than thirty-six millions ; it performs more than one-fifth of the mechanical work of the body, exerting a force that would lift its own weight 13,000 feet every hour. The stoppage of the heart and the cessation of life are simultaneous, the mo-

ment it stops we are in eternity. The *tongue* is the most complex in structure, not excepting even the eye, most delicate in sensibility, most marvelous in power, most varied in adaptation, the most complete embodiment and revelation of the indwelling mind.

Of all the countless animal organisms with which God has peopled the globe, and with all their wonderful variety, beauty, exquisite workmanship, adaptation to various abodes, the body of man alone is adapted to the occupancy and demand of an intelligent spirit. Suppose the spirit of Bryant had been lodged in the physical organization of an elephant, the most intelligent of all animals, could he have held a pen with his clumsy toes or dictated "Thanatopsis" to an amanuensis through the throat of such an animal? What animal but man could play the piano, even if endowed with the musical genius of a Paderewski? Not a body among all the birds, beasts and fishes is adapted to the demands of an intellectual life. The human body is the abode of a rational and immortal nature, and from the character of the house itself, we logically infer the destiny of the soul, a destiny unlike that of the beast that perishes.

Perhaps even more fearful and wonderful than reason is that strange characteristic of man, that still, soft voice that speaks so clearly within our utmost being, instructing us as to the moral worth of conduct and which constitutes what we com-

monly refer to as conscience. God has a throne in every man's heart and wherever he goes he carries with him the inward sense of His presence. How fearful is that experience of the soul called remorse! Guilty man needs no other accuser than his own conscience. Shakespeare emphasizes the word of God—"Fear shall terrify him on every side and shall entangle his feet"—when he says,

"O ! coward conscience how thou dost afflict me !
The light burns blue ; is it not dead midnight ?
Cold, fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.

And yet to balance this fearful exposure to self condemnation is the equally wonderful susceptibility of the soul to be satisfied in doing right. What sweet content a clear conscience brings :

"His strength was as the strength of ten
Because his heart was pure."

After Cardinal Wolsey's fall, Cromwell asks, "How does Your Grace ?" Wolsey, sustained by the sense of personal innocence, answers :

"Why well :
Never so truly happy, my good Cromwell !
I know myself now, and I feel within me
A peace above all earthly dignities—
A still and quiet conscience."

The voice of conscience is the voice of God, declaring His abhorrence of wicked deeds, and that His Providence presides over the actions of moral agents, and so gives intimation of the future woe to those who obstinately persist in their trespasses and impenitence, and opens before the heart, right with God, the blessedness of an everlasting glory.

VIII.

MAN'S UNREALIZED IDEALS.

A future life is needed for the working out of that moral completeness which the present never brings. We are cut off when we begin to be ready to do something in the world. Beecher said : " We are like plants in an inhospitable climate, which bear leaves and blossoms, but no fruit." Nature cannot do her work in vain. There must be some clime where we can bear our fruit. Victor Hugo expresses the hope that death is not life's close, but rather its beginning :—" I feel in myself the future life ; I am like a forest that has been more than once cut down ; the new shoots are stronger and livelier than ever ; I am rising I know towards the sky ; the sunshine is upon my head ; the earth gives me its generous sap, but heaven lights me with reflections of unknown worlds. You say the soul is nothing but the resultant of bodily powers, why, then, is my soul the more luminous when my bodily powers begin to fail ? Winter is upon my head and eternal Spring is in my heart ; I breathe at this hour the fragrance of the lilacs, the violets and the roses as at twenty years ; the nearer I approach the end, the plainer I hear around me the immortal symphonies of the worlds which invite me ; it is marvelous, yet simple. For half a century I have been writing my thought in prose, verse, history, philosophy, drama, romance, tradition,

satire, ode, song, I have tried all, but I feel that I have not said the thousandth part of what is in me. When I go down to the grave I can say, like so many others, 'I have finished my day's work;' I cannot say, 'I have finished my life! My day's work will begin again the next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley—it is a thoroughfare; it closes in the twilight to open with the dawn. My work is only beginning; my monument is hardly above its foundation; I would be glad to see it mounting and mounting forever; the thirst for the infinite proves infinity.'

Goethe says his belief in the immortality of the soul springs from the idea of activity,—“for I have the most assured conviction that our soul is of an essence absolute, indestructible, an essence that works on from eternity to eternity. It is like the sun, which, to our earthly eye, sinks and sets, but in reality never sinks but shines on unceasingly.” Bishop Randolph S. Foster argues: “The philosophy of the mind shows that it was made, not for a day, but for eternity. The improvidence of God in stopping it would be like the improvidence of an artist who should go into the studio and commence making a beautiful specimen of art, clothing it with utmost richness and utmost perfection of beauty, and then, just when he had fairly got it set up, sufficiently advanced to show what it was to be, should burn it up and repeat that day after day. Suppose a man should work hard to make a

fortune and as soon as he made it, should put it into the fire and burn it up, would you not say he was insane? Suppose you found a maker of anything, who just when his creation began to be worthy, should dash it to pieces, what would you think of his wisdom? If it were a work that had infinite possibilities of good in it and he should pulverize it just when realization of possible good was reached, what would you think then? Would not all intelligence pronounce it a reckless, nay, an insane whim? The argument from the nature of the soul is precisely this."

Browning says :

I know this earth is not my sphere,
For I cannot so narrow me, but that
I shall exceed it.

This high ideal which is not reached on earth intimates an immortal life, which may afford time and scope for its realization. Lowell nobly says in his elegy on the death of Canning :

Thou art not dead : in thy higher sphere
Thy spirit bends itself to loving tasks,
And strength to perfect what is dreamed of here
Is all the crown and glory that it asks.

Theodore Parker on his death-bed said to a friend, "I am not afraid to die, but I might wish to carry on my work. I have only half used the powers God gave me." Emmanuel Kant argued from the existence of a moral law unrealized and unrealizable here, the necessity of some after-life. Perfection is the heritage with which God has

endowed me, and since this short life does not give completeness, I must have the immortal life in which to find it. This yearning after perfection and completeness is the soul's qualification for and prophecy of its own immortality. I know no viewpoint from which the grandeur of life is more impressive. The high aspirations of the soul are no longer blasting mockeries. The problem of life is solved. It is the precursor of a possible perfection which to be realized will lay all eternity under tribute.

The vast strides man has made during the short compass of his present earth-life in his march towards civilization, is a prophecy of the infinite possibilities before him in the future, and death is only a stage in man's evolution upward, only another name for birth, introducing him into another grander sphere of the eternal process moving on.

Your past life has been down hill and towards gloom: your future is uphill towards the glorious sun-rise.

Dying is throwing open the door that the bird may fly out of his netted cage and be heard singing in higher flights and in diviner realms.

IX

THE IMMORTALITY OF LOVE.

The love that lightens life acts instinctively on the hypothesis of eternity. In the untimely death of Arthur Henry Hallam, Tennyson lost his dearest friend ; in his "In Memoriam" the poet's love seeks an immortal support ; in the persistence of love and longing to meet the loved again, the poet argues that death is only a temporary loss :—

But in my spirit will I dwell,
And dream my dreams and hold it true,
For though my lips may breathe adieu,
I cannot think the thing, farewell.

At the foot of the white marble cross which his wife placed upon the grave of Charles Kingsley, are graven these words : " We have loved, we love, we shall love. "

In the beautiful drama of *Ion* the instinct of immortality so eloquently uttered by the death of the devoted Greek finds a deep response in every soul. When about to yield his young existence a sacrifice to his fate, his beloved Clemanthe asks, if they shall meet again, to which he replies : " I asked that dreadful question of the hills that seemed eternal, of the clear streams that flow forever, of the stars among whose fields of azure, my spirit has walked. As I look upon thy loving face I feel that there is something in thy love that cannot wholly perish. *We shall meet again Clemanthe.* "

Love is forever. The marriage contract, "until death do us part" really does not mean a contract for this life only. Love's language is forever and she speaks no other tongue.

In one of George MacDonald's romances, there is a young girl, carefully nurtured, but who had never been touched religiously, who was engaged to marry a man who was a professed unbeliever. But it comes to pass, that this girl is awakened spiritually, that she comes to know herself as a being crowned with the sapphire glow of immortality, and she questions George: "Tell me how long you will love me?" And after a little discussion of that sort, she lets the young man go, because she says, "It may be only a whim, but it is my whim to be loved as an immortal woman."

None of us want to be loved any other way, and if it were that we should not meet and know one another in heaven, then when our dead are laid away in the grave, our love for them ought to die. But we do not cease to love the dead, neither do we love them less, but rather more than we love the living, with a love more unselfish and with less taint of earthliness about it, and if we, with all our restrictions upon us, can love so ardently, how much more can those, who with ever-broadening faculties having entered into the fullness of life, love with deeper passionateness.

The yearning for the eternal life of those we love involves the certainty that the great heart of

God will out-soar, in the eternal order which He has established, our highest desires. When our friends have crossed the river, we are somehow bound to them by the chords of a deathless love. We can somehow never realize that they are gone, the looks, the forms, the voices, the smiles of the dead are still with us. We feel their mysterious nearness. Love still teaches us to love them. In every tear that we shed, in every sigh that we heave, we have so many proofs in the soul itself, that the dead, whose memory we so fondly cherish, still live immortal beyond the grave.

We are richer for having loved although we lost. As Tennyson puts it :

This truth came born with bier and pall,
I felt it when I sorrowed most ;
'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

Whittier hopefully cries :—

Yet love will dream and faith will trust,
Since He who knows our need is just,
That somewhere, somehow meet we must.
Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress trees :
Who hopeless lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day
Across the mournful marbles lay,
Who hath not learned in hours of faith
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That life is ever lord of death,
And love can never lose its own.

Holy affections as well as glorious bodies shall come forth from the tomb, suspended ties of love,

which like plants whose life retired during winter into the bosom of the earth will revive in vernal loveliness and blossom in an eternal spring. This is the immortality which Christ brought to light through the Gospel, this agreeable hope that we shall surely rise again in new beauty when the eternal morning shall dawn upon the grave, this pleasurable anticipation which rises like a May sun over the world of social life, cheering, warming and making it beautiful, subdues the keenness of grief and brightens up the short interval of sorrow between the death of our loved ones and our own, and casts back the light of comfort from the distant heavens upon the bleak shores of this mortal life.

A man returning from a whaling voyage entered port at New Bedford ; he had been three years on the cruise and had left his wife and little boy behind. The whaler had been reported as nearing land and the wife and little boy had gone down on the point that juts out a mile or more into the bay to keep a watch for the loved one. They had brought with them a sea-glass so that they might catch a glimpse of the familiar form at the earliest moment possible. Yonder, just off Cuttyhunk the boat comes into sight with all canvas spread spanking along beneath a stiff breeze. See the woman now as she levels her glass,—the throbbing breast, the flashing eye, the intense eagerness in every attitude and gesture, the flush

of face, the cry of laughter, the tears of joy. She waves her handkerchief as a welcome on the breeze, while the boy dances for gladness, swinging and shouting over the water; they see the husband and father, and he sees them and waves his tarpaulin as a sign of recognition. Ah! who can tell the joy of these loving hearts when husband clasps wife in his strong arms and the boy weeps for gladness on his neck.

When we reach the land unswept by storm, when we enter the city and temple of our God, fresh from the clasp of death and our victory over it, we shall not feel alone in that multitude. The loved of long ago will gather about us and give us welcome. We shall be met at the landing. Those who loved us will greet us, speak our name and embrace us and Jesus will confess us before the angels. Those we have loved and who have gone before, we will find waiting for us at the portals and a band of beautiful immortals will surround us on that radiant shore, and with a holy rapture to which the redeemed can give utterance, lead us to the exalted Saviour and with us bow at His feet and receive the conqueror's crown from Him.

